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Break 1748

department of natural resource

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58345

December 1, 1976

An advisory against eating wood ducks, mallards and woodcock bagged in the Coosa River-Floyd County area has been issued by the Georgia's Board of Natural Resources (DNR).

Investigation by DNR shows that wood ducks, mallards and woodcock from this area have levels of PCB (polychlorinated biphenyl) that exceed the limit of five parts per million (ppm) recommended by the Federal Food and Drug Administration.

Jack Crockford, Director of the Department's Game and Fish Division, says "I am not surprised at these findings, in light of the PCB levels discovered in fish taken from streams in this area."

Crockford pointed out that "these birds are local, resident birds. The mallards, for example, are known to be part of a semi-domestic flock in that area."

Crockford stressed that the advisory does not apply to game birds in any other area of the state.

Other wildlife tested in the Coosa-Floyd area showed either trace amounts of PCB or the chemical was non-detectible. Among these species tested were squirrels, bullfrogs, beavers, rabbits, snakes and muskrats.

PCB at levels above the FDA limit of 5 ppm in the Coosa-Floyd area were:

Wood duck -- up to 11.42 ppm.

Mallard -- up to 11.67 ppm.

UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION IV
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ATLANTA, GEORGIA 30308

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

An advisory against eating fish in the Coosa River below Rome, Georgia today was extended through Lake Weiss across the stateline in Alabama. High levels of the chemical PCB were found in both commercial and game fish taken from the sprawling lake.

The U. S. Environmental Protection Agency posted the warnings on fish caught in Lake Weiss, a reservoir which is fed by the Coosa River. Georgia pollution control officials earlier had cited risks in eating fish caught in the Coosa river on the Georgia side.

The Federal Drug and Food Administration has recommended a polychlorinated biphynl (PCB) level of five parts per million as the safety level for fish and shell fish.

Some channel catfish from the lake contained PCB's higher than 50 parts per million. Game fish, while considerably lower, also exceeded the established safety level.

Jack E. Ravan, Regional Administrator of EPA, commented: "New data on fish taken from Lake Weiss show much higher PCB levels than previously reported. Citizens should be cautioned against eating

11/5/76

fish taken from the lake, especially channel catfish caught in this area."

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State of Alabama
Water Improvement Commission
State Office Building
Montgomery, AL 36130
Telephone 277-3630
James W. Warr, Chief
Administrative Officer

September 16, 1976

NEWS RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE USE

Montgomery--Samples of fish and water collected in Weiss reservoir, on the Coosa River, and analyzed for PCB's (polychlorinated biphenyls), did not indicate a cause for alarm concerning public health or the fish population, Alabama state officials announced today.

James W. Warr, chief administrative officer, Alabama Water Improvement Commission (AWIC), said investigations to date showed specimens of some species of fish to exceed the 5 parts per million limit for PCB concentrations in the edible portion of fish flesh established by the Food and Drug Administration, but no water samples tested have exceeded currently applicable concentration limits.

Dr. Ira L. Myers, state health officer and chairman of AWIC, said data available do not indicate a problem insofar as human health is concerned.

"Given the current dietary habits of the people of Alabama and the lack of evidence directly linking PCB's with adverse effects on human health, no additional action is warranted at this time," Dr. Myers said.

Based on Dr. Myers' statement, the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, the agency concerned with fisheries resources, presently has no plans to close Weiss Lake to commercial fishing.

Public interest in the possibility of excessive PCB concentrations in the waters and fish of Weiss Lake has intensified in recent weeks as a result of analyses of water and fish samples from Coosa River waters upstream from the Alabama-Georgia line.

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Warr said Thursday's announcement followed conferences with the State Health Department and the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. Copies of all data collected by AWIC have been furnished both of these agencies.

He said investigations made by AWIC on Aug. 18-19 and Sept. 7-8 included the collection of numerous fish samples, three water samples, and one sediment sample. While the sediment and water samples were analyzed within a short time, the examination of fish samples consumed a more lengthy period required by the removal and testing of the edible portions of fish, involving the grinding and mixing, or compositing, of portions from two or more fish in order to produce an average concentration value.

"We do not have the capability to do PCB analysis within AWIC, and were dependent on outside support from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Pesticide Laboratory at Auburn to do the testing," Warr explained.

Polychlorinated biphenyl is a chlorinated organic compound similar to DDT and is reported to be carcinogenic to rats.

Warr said fish data collected to date may be grouped into two categories--that applicable to game fish, such as bass, and that applicable to commercial fish or bottom feeders, such as catfish. The pattern of results seems to indicate that the concentrations in game fish are within FDA limits, while the presence of PCB's in the commercial fish often exceed the pertinent limit.

On nine composites of the edible portion of game fish, only two samples exceeded the limit of 5 parts per million. On seven composites of edible portions of commercial fish, five exceeded 5 parts per million.

Possibly more significant, according to Warr, is the data produced as a result of analyses of water samples. Water samples were collected at three locations, as were the fish samples--near the Alabama-Georgia state line, in the vicinity of Cedar Bluff, and above Weiss Dam. None of these samples exceeded the 1 part per billion level currently considered acceptable for

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human consumption, and were so low as to approach the lower limits of analytical capability. No official limit for PCB's in drinking water has been established.

Warr said additional data are needed and that AWIC personnel will continue to work closely with representatives of the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, the Environmental Protection Agency, and others in any monitoring efforts needed to better define and quantify the impact of PCB's in the Weiss Lake area.

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File
PCB
General
C-1, D-3

2/1/77

Mr. Leon Kirkland
Georgia Game & Fish Division
270 Washington Street
Atlanta, GA 30334

Dear Mr. Kirkland:

At long last I have received from the EPA laboratory in Duluth, MN the results of the PCB analyses on fish collected in your State in the Spring of 1976. I am enclosing these results along with the method used in preparation and analyses.

We do appreciate your cooperation in this study and hope the information can be of use to your staff. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to call me.

Sincerely,

J. L. Peltier
Ecology Branch

Enclosures

cc: Gene S. Welsh
Environmental Protection Division

Sample Area	Sample Composition	PCB's (ug/gm) 1016/1242	1254
Coosa River upstream from Weiss Reservoir, GA & AL State Line	2 Goldfish 1 Carp 4 Largemouth Bass 4 Gizzard Shad 2 Bullhead Catfish	5.00	60.0
Savannah River, Savannah, GA	1 Black Crappie 5 Channel Catfish 1 Bullhead Catfish 2 Redhorse Sucker 1 Summer Flounder 1 Largemouth Bass 1 White Catfish 1 Striped Bass	<0.10	3.07
Coosa River at Rome, GA	1 Largemouth Bass 2 Channel Catfish 1 Black Crappie 1 White Bass 1 Gizzard Shad 1 Carp 1 Smallmouth Buffalo	5.29	69.7
Chattahoochee River ~~Albany, GA~~	3 Largemouth Bass 1 Black Crappie 1 White Catfish	2.54	4.92
Chattahoochee River downstream from W.F. George Reservoir at ~~Albany, GA~~	1 Carp 1 Largemouth Bass 1 Black Crappie 1 White Catfish 1 Bluegill	4.15	4.28
Lake Jackson, upstream from dam	8 Largemouth Bass 5 Bluegills 2 Redbreast Sunfish 8 Bullhead 1 Warmouth	<0.10	<0.20
Altamaha River, Darien, GA	7 American Eels	-	24.5

Coosa

department of natural resources

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September 8, 1976

Joe D. Tanner, Commissioner of the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), announced that the Natural Resources Board, meeting in special session today, closed the Coosa River to commercial fishing from Rome to the Georgia-Alabama line. Included in the ban are all streams flowing into the Coosa from the confluence of the Etowah and Oostanaula Rivers to the state line, and that portion of Lake Weiss located in Georgia.

DNR has found that fish taken from the Coosa are likely to contain levels of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCB's) above the tolerance established by the U. S. Food and Drug Administration of 5 parts per million.

DNR further encourages sport fishermen and other not to eat fish taken from the Georgia stretch of the Coosa.

The Natural Resources Board also authorized the Commissioner to take action immediately if PCB levels are found to exceed FDA limits in any streams in the Coosa River basin.

Tommy Irwin, Commissioner of the Georgia Department of Agriculture has promised the full cooperation of his department in the ban on commercial fish taken from the Coosa. He asks the public to let his office know about any possible sale or attempted sale of fish from the

river. In its regulatory function, the Agriculture Department is empowered by law to prosecute any commercial sale of contaminated fish.

Leonard Ledbetter, director of DNR's Environmental Protection Division, said his division in cooperation with the Game and Fish Division is monitoring every major stream and impoundment in Georgia for PCB's. However, he said there is no reason to suspect at this time that results from other areas will be in the range of those found in the Coosa.

Leon Kirkland, Chief of Fisheries of DNR's Game and Fish Division, said present studies show that PCB levels are running higher in channel catfish than in other species found in the Coosa, but he also warns than any fish taken from the river should not be eaten until further notice.

More than 500 warning signs will be posted in the Coosa area by conservation rangers of DNR's Game and Fish Division. Rangers will also personally warn sport fishermen and the public about the situation

-- The known source of the PCB's in the Coosa is the General Electric plant at Rome, Georgia. Plant officials are making efforts to minimize losses or spills into the environment. Earlier this year, the state EPD and the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency required additional changes at the plant to further minimize releases of PCB's.

PCB's are a group of organic compounds used primarily in the manufacturing of electronic capacitors and transformers. They are toxic to aquatic life, are biologically accumulative, and persist in the environment for a long time.

Commissioner Tanner stresses that the public will be informed immediately about any new developments as soon as they are discovered by DNR's investigative and study teams.

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The Federal Food and Drug Administration has established a recommended limit of 5 parts per million of PCB's for fish and shellfish. Results from the State's Environmental Protection Division's laboratory showed the following:

LOCATION	FISH	PCB - Parts Per Milli
Coosa River - Mayo's Bar downstream of Rome	Channel Catfish	5.9
	Channel Catfish	27.0
	Channel Catfish	127.0
	Channel Catfish	22.0
	Largemouth Bass	5.7
	Largemouth Bass	2.1
	Gizzard Shad	16.0
	Gizzard Shad	115.0
	Redear Sunfish	4.5
	Redear Sunfish	11.0
Coosa River - Georgia - Alabama State Line	Largemouth Bass	54.0
	Largemouth Bass	7.8
	Largemouth Bass	18.0
	Largemouth Bass	3.3
	Bluegill	18.0
	Redear Sunfish	2.5
	Black Crappie	3.5
	Brown Bullhead	4.1

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EPD#76-078